

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Chairman, if the gentleman will yield, I am prepared to accept the gentleman's amendment. I think this is a very positive amendment. It has nothing to do with what we were discussing earlier, and I am prepared to accept your amendment.

□ 1530

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Well, I'm not sure everyone is, so if I may continue. There are over 4,500 projects that these resource advisory committees have worked on. They have leveraged \$292 million to improve watersheds and wildlife habitats, and reduce the risk of catastrophic fire. No resource advisory committee has been disbanded or melted down. There are 70 of them in 13 States. No RAC-approved project has been appealed or litigated. No other active land management initiative in either the Departments of Agriculture or Interior can equal such a track record.

This has brought disparate individuals together to do good things for the land, habitat and watersheds in a comprehensive way that leverages local funds and support.

Today, as we debate this issue on the floor of this House, fires are raging at Lake Tahoe, destroying homes and habitats and watershed. Those sorts of efforts, where they tried to get in and thin in this watershed and protect it and reduce the threat of fire, might have been allowed to occur had there been a resource advisory committee like these, and I don't know what they have got there, but certainly they were not able to get the job done before the fire hit.

We are trying to do good things for our national forests, and I know others are trying to as well. I just hope we can approve this.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Chairman, I reserve my remaining minute.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Mr. Chairman, there are few Members of Congress who have more open territory than I do in my district. There is enough space there to put four eastern States easily and have room left over. I have rural schools and problems that very much reflect the concerns that have been expressed here.

But at the same time, I must say to the chairman and to the House, I was sitting in my office observing the discussion early when the Doolittle amendment was up. I was about to come to the floor because the chairman of the full committee was beginning a discussion regarding who taxes too much or too little, and who spends too much and too little, and we will have that conversation as we go forward. But that is what caused me to want to come to the floor.

In the meantime, Mr. DOOLITTLE had a very specific problem that was going to be taken care of, and it was objected to because it was legislating on an appropriations bill. Because of that, I am going to be pretty tough on this. The

reason I reserved in this case, even though it affects my own district, it is my intention to ask that the amendment be stricken.

Mr. DICKS. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LEWIS of California. I yield to the chairman.

Mr. DICKS. The only thing I would say here is that this amendment is much different than the Doolittle amendment. This would help the gentleman from Oregon and Mr. DOOLITTLE in having a placeholder in the bill.

As the gentleman knows, we agreed to \$425 million in the supplemental to help these gentlemen on the rural schools. My concern here is that this is not an appropriations problem, this is supposed to be an authorization problem. I even helped them way back in 1992 or 1993 when the timber harvest went way down—Congresswoman Dunn and I got the first program through Congress to keep this going for 10 years.

I have been a friend of this rural schools program. I don't quite understand why this very small amendment that doesn't have any negative impact on anyone would be stricken.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, reclaiming my time, if I could.

I understand the point that the chairman is making, and I am very appreciative of it.

The bill, as you know, was slushed with an awful lot of money above and beyond what we anticipated. Before we got the last \$3 billion we had a fine bill. It strikes me that as we were slushing, we might have put some money in this category if we were so concerned about it.

But in the meantime, there is little doubt that because of the need for consistency here, if we are going to be striking language in the fashion that I saw as I was sitting in my office, selectively, then it seems to me we ought to try to at least raise the flag of consistency, and it is my intention to do that here.

#### POINT OF ORDER

Mr. LEWIS of California. At your will, Mr. Chairman, I make a point of order against the amendment because it proposes to change existing law and constitutes legislation in an appropriation bill and therefore violates clause 2 of rule XXI.

The rule states in pertinent part: "An amendment to a general appropriation bill shall not be in order if changing existing law."

The amendment in this case imparts direction, so I insist upon my point of order.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Does any Member wish to speak on the point of order?

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Chairman, to the point of order, again, the gentleman is technically correct. But again, unlike the previous amendment, this amendment not only does not cost money, it actually benefits the Federal Government and the Federal taxpayers.

I wish the gentleman would reconsider that point and not target this because of an earlier debate on a different issue having to do with spending levels. This actually would save the taxpayers money. I would ask that the gentleman reconsider his objection.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Seeing no further speakers on the point of order, the Chair is prepared to rule.

The Chair finds that this amendment includes language imparting direction. The amendment, therefore, constitutes legislation in violation of clause 2 of rule XXI.

The point of order is sustained and the amendment is not in order.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. LAMBORN

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. LAMBORN:

At the end of the bill (before the short title) insert the following:

None of the funds in this Act may be used for the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the order of the House of Tuesday, June 26, 2007, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS) each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer an amendment that recognizes the difficult fiscal situation facing our government.

The Interior Appropriations bill has the largest increase over the President's request of any of the spending bills, and I will support efforts to bring the costs down as these opportunities arise. At a time when our budget needs balancing, we must reprioritize our spending. That is why the amendment I am proposing now would eliminate funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

I am disappointed that my earlier amendment yesterday was not accepted as it would have directed some of the funding toward the PLT program, or payment in lieu of taxes by the Federal Government to compensate for lost revenues to local governments.

But I still maintain that particularly in this budget environment, taxpayers should not be asked to fund the National Endowment for the Arts. Now opposition to the NEA should not be perceived as opposition to the arts. My wife is an artist, and I support the arts wholeheartedly. But I do feel strongly that it is something that the private sector can fully, and has in the past fully and wholeheartedly supported.

True art can and does survive without Federal handouts. Artists have every right to be creative without forcing the taxpayer to fund it. The private sector is the appropriate venue to fund such projects. I know artists who refuse to take money from any level of government because they want to be